

## FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW

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There had been no less than thirty-six thefts and burglaries in the eastern suburb of the city, all evidently by the same hand, and yet the police had not found the culprit.

I know that the police worked hard on this case, and that every seeming clue was carefully followed, and that they let a boy fifteen years old take all the credit away from them was not their fault. I was that boy, and that I solved the mystery was owing to luck. The crimes began about the middle of September, and I gave them no attention until about the 1st of November. Then I happened to be talking with a man who had had his pushcart stolen. This, in fact, was at the beginning of the thefts. He mentioned that the tire of one of the wheels had been wrapped with wire to tighten it.

On the night of the talk another house was robbed. It was only two blocks from my father's house, and I went there, with others. The police refused all information, but during the day I was told by a son of the householder that they had found tracks under a window. It was an open fall, and the ground had not yet frozen. The tracks were those of a boot, and the sole of one had been mended. I went up and down the alley in the rear of the house with this boy, and in the dust we found the impress of what looked to be buggy tires. They were something else, however—they were the impress of the tires of that pushcart. At every revolution one of the wheels left a sort of smudge, and I was justified in believing that it was the tire that did it.

My theory was that all the stolen goods had been taken away in the pushcart, but the case was blocked right there. Where had they been taken? Had I gone to the police with my theory I should have been ridiculed. The detective who can't find a clue himself doesn't want any one else to find one. When I had lain awake a dozen nights trying to figure things out luck helped me. The streets were still dusty. A barn had been broken open and a lot of bedding temporarily stored therein had been taken.

I happened to be passing the place when the discovery was made and the police telephoned for. There were the tracks of the pushcart again. In the dusty road following the cart were boot tracks, and one of them had a patch on the sole. I followed them for a mile straight out into the country before they were lost.

It was easy to figure that if the thief was not selling any of his plunder he was storing it somewhere and that the country offered a safer place than the city. The idea now was to follow along the road and spot off any likely looking place. I had my mind made up that it would be an old barn out about two miles. I walked out on the road for five miles and found no one but farmers of honest standing. I took two crossroads and followed them for a distance, but with the same result. The thief had gone out that road with the pushcart and the bedding, but where had he brought up? The weather changed, the ground froze, and all at once the crimes ceased.

Then luck came again. I was buying a pair of winter gloves in a store when a farmer called and asked for a pair of mittens for a woman. Some talk followed, and it came out that she was a widow who was living next to him, three miles out of town. He also asked where he could get a pair of rubber boots for her.

I got the idea right then and there that the widow was the criminal. It seemed absurd, but yet the idea clung. A detective would have told me to go home and seek my head, and a reporter would have laughed me out of his room. I chewed over the thing for a week, and then something happened.

I had been sent on an errand directly after breakfast, and I passed a house which had been burglarized the night before. There were quite a number of people about, and the owner was telling them how entrance had been effected and what had been taken. What hunters and farmers call a tracking snow had fallen during the night, and the first thing I looked for was the track of that pushcart.

An alley ran alongside the house, and there they were. There were also prints of rubber boots. The alley gate opened rather hard, and sticking to it were some small threads of blue yarn. The farmer had brought blue mittens for the widow. Taking up the tracks, I followed them for two miles before they were obliterated by travel. I kept on to the house of the widow and found it a small cottage. Between the gate and the road the cart tracks and the footprints were as plain as day.

I had worked the case as far as I could, and I now went to the police. I was sneered at and warned not to meddle with their business. I went to the sufferer by the last robbery, and as he was a man of influence and anxious to get his property back he not only listened, but insisted that something be done. A search warrant was procured, a couple of detectives went out to the widow's farm, and from an outdoor cellar enough stolen property was dragged to fill several stores.

She had been stealing off and on for three years. She had always dressed as a man in her excursions. Until she stole the pushcart she had used a wheelbarrow. Stolen money she had made use of, but not a stolen article had been sold. She had passed for a respectable, hard working woman, and by her keeping the goods on hand her lawyers made out that she was a kleptomaniac and got her a sentence of two years, when she might have otherwise got fifteen.

## THE DREADED PARIS APACHES

Their Dark and Terrible Deeds Are Spreading Consternation.

Ruffianly marauders, gracing themselves with the most alarming names, are bringing about a reign of terror in Paris. Night after night outrages are repeated by the hardened organized criminals, some barely over fourteen years of age and none over thirty.

Among the bands are the Belleville "Apaches," the Auteuil "Slicers," the "Black Masks," the "Blue Belts" and others. The most famous and the most feared of all are the "Apaches."

Just how many Apaches there are is an unsolved mystery. Two of their most famous chiefs are now prisoners in New Caledonia, and Milo, the original founder of the band, died there.

The real head of the Apaches is their queen, familiarly called on account of her hair "Golden Helmet." She always becomes the consort of the Apache who is chief for the time being, and she controls the destinies of the band. She does not participate in the exploits of the band, but reaps the fruit of victory and has even pretensions to fashion. "Golden Helmet" has been the cause of nearly fifty duels between Apaches in the past two years, and she impartially gives her hand to the victors.

The methods of the Apaches are simple. There is no attempt at decoy or deception. Any thoroughfare will do as a scene, any belated wayfarer as victim. Of a sudden some six or eight forms glide silently out from the shadows. If the man appears strong or if the street be in a frequented district there is no parrying. A force from behind pins his arms to his sides, while his head is given a few sharp taps, which produce silence. His pockets are rifled, and he is finally left with a knife penetrating into his vitals. The name of the band is generally scrawled on a bit of paper pinned to his flesh with the knife.

Sometimes just after nightfall the Apaches prowl the streets of their own districts looking for victims to capture and torture. As soon as one is found whistles summon the entire band, and then, with a mock bow, one says: "Permit me to introduce my friends. You have heard of us. We are the Apaches of Belleville." The victim is taken to the headquarters of the band.

"Sit down!" orders the chief. The rest of the Apaches, brandishing gleaming blades, gather around in a ring. "Now drink." A quart bottle of absinthe is forced to his mouth. At the first gulp of the neat liquor the wretch gasps. A vigorous kick administered in his stomach warns him that no trifling will be tolerated. "Drink!" the tormentor demands. And at every pause for breath and as the victim, sinking more and more under the baleful influence of the drug, lets the bot-



"SIT DOWN," ORDERS THE CHIEF.

tle half slip, the kicks in the stomach are renewed, varied by pricks of poniards in the chest and back and blows from loaded sticks and American knuckledusters.

When complete unconsciousness has come the arch inquisitors end their dandish task by stripping their victim, lacerating his body with cuts and stabs, opening his cheeks and cutting off his nose or ears and tearing out either or both of his eyes. Finally they thrust through his lips a knife blade on which they stick a paper marked "The Apaches." If it were not for the bloody evidences and the ill omened words the story would pass as a dream of the maddest delirium of absinthe drinking.

A caddy has been murdered, and in attempting to rescue him three policemen have been disabled at 4 o'clock in the afternoon on the boulevard because the cab happened to stop near a spot where some Apaches were standing. As usual, the Apaches escaped unharmed.

When there is little business doing the Apaches often divide into rival bands and hold a pitched battle in a deserted square in the dead of night just to keep themselves in practice. Knives flash and pistols resound, the sport being carried on in earnest, and rarely less than two or three corpses are left to mark the scene of the fray.

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E. L. MARTIN, Macon, Ga.

Hospitality. Dumas, the elder, had a dog as hospitable as his master, and this dog once invited twelve others to Monte Cristo, Dumas' palace, named after his famous novel. Dumas' factotum in chief wished to drive off the whole pack.

"Michael," said the great romancer, "I have a social position to sustain. It entails a fixed amount of trouble and expense. You say that I have thirteen dogs and that they are eating me out of house and home. Thirteen! What an unlucky number!"

"Monseigneur—if you will permit—there is but one thing left to do. I must drive them all away."

"Never, Michael!" replied Dumas. "Never! Go at once and find me a fourteenth dog."

## Saved by Dynamite.

Sometimes, a flaming city is saved by dynamiting a space that the fire can't cross. Sometimes, a cough hangs on so long, you feel as if nothing but dynamite would cure it. Z. T. Gray, of Calhoun, Ga., writes: "My wife had a very aggravated cough, which kept her awake nights. Two physicians could not help her; so she took Dr. King's New Discovery for Consumption, Coughs and Colds, which eased her cough, gave her sleep, and finally cured her." Strictly scientific cure for bronchitis and La Grippe. At Ed Greene's drug store, price 50c and \$1.00, guaranteed. Trial bottle free.

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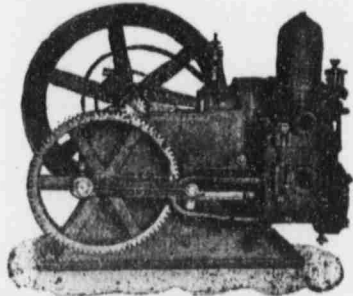
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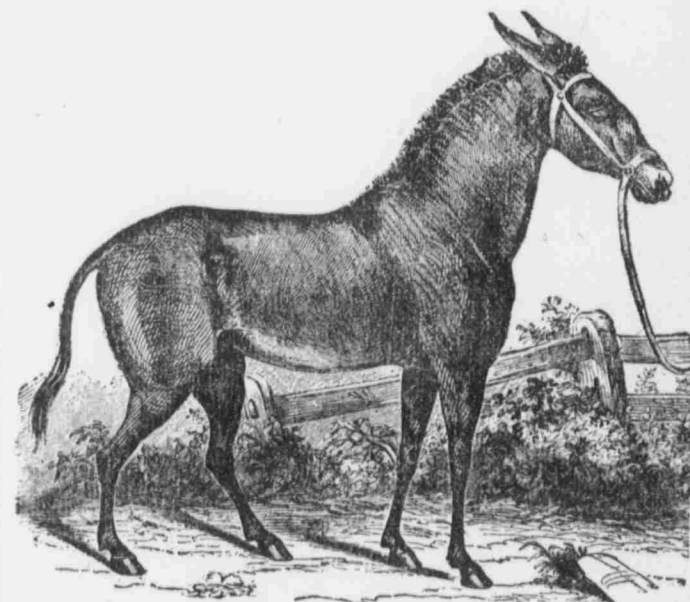
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